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Draft report

Addendum

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Programme questions: programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1998-1999 (item 3(a))

Report of the Secretary-General on ways in which the full implementation and the quality of mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and could be better assessed by and reported to Member States (General Assembly resolution 53/207, sect. V, para. 18)

1. At its 25th and 26th meetings, on 26 June 2000, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General on ways in which the full implementation and the quality of mandated programmes and activities could be ensured and could be better assessed by and reported to Member States (General Assembly resolution 53/207, sect. V, para. 18) (A/55/85).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of it.

Discussion

3. The improved quality and presentation was appreciated, although concern was expressed over the late availability of the report. The report was considered to be concise, clear and informative. The recommendations were based on thorough and sound analysis and were in line with the rules and regulations governing programme planning and monitoring. It was also observed that the full impact of the proposed approach was difficult to assess and, therefore, endorsing such major changes without more discussion on the full implications was difficult. It was also cautioned

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that, while achieving objectives was important, it should not be the overriding factor, and care should be taken not to compromise other United Nations principles.

4. It was emphasized that the linkage between the medium-term plan, the programme budget and the monitoring and evaluation of programme performance as instruments in an integrated management process was important, and further improvement of the process was essential. With the recent revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8), focus was being placed on achievements and accomplishments, and not only on outputs. It was noted that the formulation of the expected accomplishments in programme budgets could be further improved so that they were clearer and so that it was possible to judge whether they had been achieved at the end of the biennium. It was also observed that there were inherent limitations to the formulation of expected accomplishments and the measurement of achievements, although they were considered indispensable tools for effective monitoring. Systematic, consistent and effective monitoring could assist managers to implement mandated activities, thereby achieving the stated objectives and providing a tool to decide on problematic parts of the programme.

5. While acknowledging that performance indicators were necessary, it was considered that more discussion was required as to their form and as to who would establish them (programme managers or Member States) once the format of the medium-term plans had been adopted. The indicators should address the quality of achievement. The role of intergovernmental bodies in evaluating the implementation of outputs and services compared with the present situation needed to be clarified. It was noted that the proposed information on achievements would be additional to the quantified data on implementation, including information on uncompleted activities, as indicated in the report, which would increase the level of oversight for the Committee.

6. Several views were expressed on the timing and use of the programme performance report. The view was expressed that, while lessons could be learned from the programme performance report that could assist in the programme-planning process, a direct linkage between that report and the programme budget was not feasible and not in conformity with the regulations and rules. The programme budget was determined by legislative decisions and proposals of the Secretary-General. As the programme budget and programme performance report were prepared by separate entities in the United Nations and taken up at different times, it was difficult to see how they could be linked.

7. The view was expressed that managers should be responsible for achieving full implementation with the resources allocated, but it was also observed that programme managers needed to have a clear indication of what was required by Member States. The direct responsibility of individual programme managers to implement their programmes was stressed. The practicality and feasibility of programme managers, addressing the Committee to explain non-implementation, as suggested in the report, was questioned. The introduction and effectiveness of computerized monitoring systems was recognized, and the Office of Internal Oversight Services was encouraged to arrange the necessary training in this regard.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/85) and reaffirmed the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.